



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ready to Serve

Nearly 5,000 Alaskans are directly involved with today's Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs. Many are members of the Army or Air National Guard, and all are volunteers of one stripe or another.

The Department's stated mission, "Ready to Serve," encompasses a broad intent that is embraced by military members and the hundreds of civilian employees and volunteers alike.

OVERVIEW

It is in the eyes of the service members and the employees alike – purpose, direction, expectation, and success. The reason: the Department is engaged in its largest and most impressive transformation ever.

More than 4,300 of the 5,000 employees and volunteers of the department are members of the Alaska Army National Guard or the Alaska Air National Guard. More than 2,500 participate as traditional or part-time members of the Guard. Some 275 members of the Alaska State Defense Force and 95 members of the Alaska Naval Militia also contribute thousands of hours of volunteer time each year.

There are facilities in 77 communities around the state. The department has an annual budget of more than \$300 million. That money pays the salaries of Guard members, the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management and other state employees through federal/state matching fund arrangements.

The Guard is a way of life. Today's citizen-Soldiers and airmen serve America and our state with unparalleled professionalism. Guard members bring knowledge and experiences gained in civilian life into their units and their training and operational activities. Each person returns to their home or workplace with new leadership skills, new insights, and solid skills. Their families, businesses, and communities are stronger because of it.

The Guard has two distinct roles – federal and state. Each is embraced with energy and enthusiasm. The vision is clear and direct: The Alaska Army National Guard and the Air National Guard aspire to be the most ready reserve components in the world — expertly led, highly trained and equipped, and ready to accomplish national security and global military objectives.

Service to America – Global War on Terrorism

In the more than three years since the start of the Global War on Terrorism, the Alaska Army and Air National Guard have continued to deploy Soldiers and airmen. In the past year, Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers have served in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, the Philippines, India, Mongolia, and Korea. More are going. The 1/207th Aviation Regiment just arrived home from peace-keeping duties in Kosovo.

The Alaska Air National Guard has remained busy deploying airmen and force projection packages to Afghanistan, Iraq, Central Asia, and the Pacific.

Fully equipped and funded, the Guard can continue to honor its commitment to respond to our state in times of need.

The Alaska Army and Air National Guard have combat-ready forces poised to respond in times of need. Serving side by side with regular forces in military operations around the world, Alaska's citizen-Soldiers and airmen are capable of conducting wartime and peacekeeping missions in times of international crises and contingencies.

On the home front, in recent months as part of Operation Noble Eagle, the Guard has provided increased security joining with other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies in deterring threats of terrorism at key nodes and checkpoints across Alaska. They, along with several dozen members of the Alaska State Defense Force, also sent security teams to several key check points associated with the 800-mile-long trans-Alaska oil pipeline.

The Future Is Here, Now

Fort Greely is the home for America's Missile Defense Program and home for the Soldiers of the Alaska Army National Guard who operate and protect the system. It is also home for their families. Visitors to the post continue to remark on the sense of battle rhythm – the observation that the Soldiers are well focused, determined, and dedicated to their mission.

The Alaska Air National Guard is operating the Regional Air Operations Center at Elmendorf AFB, and is transforming into the operational space surveillance mission at Clear Air Force Station.

Operation of the Missile Defense Program at Ft. Greely has become the most significant operational activity of the Alaska Army National Guard. But a close second is the transformation of the Alaska Army Guard's primary maneuver unit – the 207th Infantry Group (Scout) into the 207th Infantry Combat Brigade Team (Scout).

With more than 2,100 Soldiers authorized, the Alaska Army National Guard operates armories and other facilities at 77 locations across the state, including Ft. Greely. They also operate 33 aircraft from Bryant Army Guard Heliport on Ft. Richardson, as well as from Juneau, Bethel, Fairbanks and Nome.

The Alaska Air National Guard has units at Kulis ANG Base, Elmendorf AFB, Eielson AFB, Clear AFS and Camp Denali. The Air Guard has nearly 2,300 airmen authorized, and 29 aircraft assigned.

An Alaska National Guardsman leads close order battle drills with Mongolian Soldiers in Iraq. Alaska National Guard Photo



GLOBAL VIEW – HOMETOWN FORCES

On a national basis, the Army National Guard comprises more than half of the Army's available combat forces and one third of our combat service and combat service support forces.

Today, the Army National Guard provides 34 percent of the Army's total strength on less than 10 percent of the Army's Budget. The Guard trains to the same standards as the Army and the Air Force. All Guard units are as ready as they are resourced to be.

Across the nation, the Army Guard has more than 365,000 Soldiers in 2,700 communities. The Guard operates 3,160 owned and 62 leased armories to support training, aviation, administration and logistics throughout America. The Air Guard is 109,000 strong, serving in nearly 90 major flying units and at more than 170 installations.

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

Virtually every week of the year, the Alaska National Guard responds to calls for help somewhere in the state. This past year, when record wildland fires swept across Alaska, the Guard – in two separate call-ups – brought more than 150 Soldiers, a dozen aircraft and three dozen heavy trucks and tracked vehicles to assist fire teams. Among the Guard's many missions, search and rescue support to people in trouble is uniquely dangerous, yet rewarding. In a typical year, with the help of friends and neighbors, the Alaska Air National Guard's Rescue Coordination Center directs more than 300 missions resulting in Army and Air Guard aviators and rescue teams saving or assisting more than 130 people.

The Guard is always ready when neighbors need help.

When it comes to threats of terrorism or disasters, like floods, urban wildfires, winter storms, sea storms, and the like, Guard members readily blend with civil authorities —such as the Alaska Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management — adding expertise in transportation, logistics, medical support, security, and communications.

DHS & EM is a team of more than 60 highly skilled civilians that operate from Camp Denali, on the north end of Fort Richardson.

The Alaska Military Youth Academy Challenge Program graduates about 200 cadets from two 22-week classes during each fiscal year. About 85 percent of the youngsters go on to college or vocational school afterward.

Youth programs, include Scouting and Junior ROTC, focus the talents of the Guard on their own local communities. Guard members voluntarily work



An Alaska Army National Guard UH-60L Black Hawk from the 1-207 "Arctic Eagles" skims over craggy mountain ridges north of the Sheep River in central Alaska. Alaska Army National Guard Photo

An Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker from the 168th Air Refueling Wing refuels F-15 Strike Eagles over central Alaska. Photo: Staff Sgt. Cherie A. Thurlby



with youngsters as mentors, teachers, and coaches.

The counter-drug efforts of the Guard are obvious and important to Alaska. In a typical year, Alaska National Guard Soldiers and airmen assist local, state and federal



Sgt. Peter Williams of Napaskiak holds his daughter, Donna, during a briefing at a deployment ceremony in Fairbanks. Williams is one of approximately 40 Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers called to Federal Active Duty to perform security at the ground missile defense facilities at Fort Greely. Photo: Spc. Michael Coleman

Fifty-seven years after an estimated 6,500 members of the Alaska Territorial Guard completed their service to Alaska, Sam Herman Sr. was the first to receive his official military discharge certificate. He was just 12 years old when he joined the Alaska Territorial Guard. Here, he salutes Maj. Gen. Craig Campbell, while Senator Lisa Murkowski and Col. (Retired) Bob Gooman look on.

Photo: Spc. Kelsea Vandergriff



law-enforcement officials in removing more than \$30 million in marijuana, cocaine, and other illegal, illicit drugs from Alaska streets. They also assist officers in seizing cash and illegal weapons.

The Alaska Federation of Natives' Sobriety Movement is embraced by the Alaska National Guard. In fact, it is a cornerstone model of how the Guard conducts its drug-demand-reduction program. The efforts are constant, the work worthy, and the results life-changing with the numbers of youth and adults who are involved annually in the community and schools programs. More than 50,000 youngsters and adults take part through school programs each year – underscoring the enduring link of the Guard's commitment to support families across our state.

Remarkably, some of the best outreach efforts include other kinds of partnerships. For example, former NBA all-star Thurl Baily has twice hosted anti-drug/alcohol-free basketball camps in rural Alaska. Likewise, Brigham Young University's Living Legends entertainment group traveled to remote communities to entertain and serve up positive drug-free lifestyle discussions in an area where drugs, alcohol, and suicide are at epidemic proportions. Healthy lifestyles, vigorous sports and activities add value to our youth and their families.

Alaska's Office of Veterans Affairs is co-located at Camp Denali. Their mission is an advocacy role on behalf of more than 71,500 Alaska veterans. With the help of Veterans Service Officers, more than \$30 million is recouped or accrued as benefits to veterans and their families each year.

In addition, outreach programs such as Stand Down (for homeless vets and their families) are presented by hundreds of volunteers at Camp Carroll (on Ft. Richardson) and Fairbanks. The Office of Veterans Affairs

hosts numerous events and activities throughout the year: Veterans & Remembrance Day on November 11; POW/MIA Day on September 18; 9-11 Commemoration Day on September 11; Independence Day on July 4; Flag Day on June 14; Memorial Day Weekend at Byers Lake State Veterans Memorial; State POW Day in April; and many more events.

The department continues to work a series of issues surrounding federal recognition of the famed Alaska Territorial Guard from World War II. With just over 350 of the original 6,600 members remaining alive, time is critical to get this completed.

In summary, the breadth and range of activities found within the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs is extraordinary. Few agencies or groups of people possess such diverse, yet complimentary, missions. Success is found in the faces of the civilian employees, Soldiers, airmen, sailors, and Marines who strive to personify their mission statement, "Ready to Serve."